

Fort Drum Fish & Wildlife Management Program



Wildlife Viewing Report – 14 May 2010

Temperatures near or above 80° F on three of the first five days of May brought large numbers of migrating birds to Fort Drum, including the first substantial wave of warblers, vireos, flycatchers, orioles, and other neotropical migrants. Few people were on the installation during the beginning of this warm spell to document the arrival dates for most species that appeared during this time, but by 5 May a large percentage of the species that normally arrive to northern New York during the first 10 days of May were present. Among these species were some of the most sought after breeding species on Fort Drum, including Upland Sandpiper, Red-headed Woodpecker, and Clay-colored and Henslow's Sparrows.

Except for Sedge Wren, which normally arrives later in May or even June, all of Fort Drum's regular nesting grassland bird species are now present, although some are still in relatively low numbers. Bobolinks and Savannah Sparrows are abundant in the large fields in TAs 12 and 13, but so far only one Henslow's Sparrow has been located, in TA13A due east of the pond in TA 12C (where the old helicopters are). Formal grassland bird surveys begin later in May, and presumably more Henslow's Sparrows will be found then. The same goes for Grasshopper Sparrows, only a couple of which have been heard so far in the Cantonment Area and at Wheeler-Sack Army Airfield. Upland Sandpipers have been found in two locations within the airfield fence: one individual was heard calling at the northern end of the airfield on 5 May, and another was seen perched on a phone pole just north of Rt. 26 on 14 May. At least two Clay-colored Sparrows have been heard singing from regenerating clearcuts along the Main Tank Trail west of the airfield.

A visit to the Matoon Marsh in TA 17B on 13 May turned up one American Coot, a species not seen frequently on Fort Drum. Also seen in the marsh were at least five Pied-billed Grebes, including two that were performing their spectacular displays in which the grebes run across the surface of the water; one American Bittern calling; and two Common Moorhens. So far no Least Bitterns have been seen or heard here, but this species breeds annually in this marsh.



Pied-billed Grebe in Training Area 17B.

Among the large influx of birds during early May were several Red-headed Woodpeckers to TA 5D east of the airfield. On 5 May two were observed in an intense territorial skirmish near the eastern end of TA 5D. Based on recent years, the best places to see Red-headed Woodpeckers this year are likely going to be the in the open oak woodlands and savannah in TAs 5B and 5D immediately east and northeast of the airfield.

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The first Whip-poor-will was heard on 28 April, which is the average arrival date for this species to Fort Drum over the past few years. Whip-poor-wills increased in abundance rapidly over the subsequent week, and now can be heard in many locations throughout the installation. Among the best places are in the open woodlands surrounding the airfield. So far no Common Nighthawks have been observed on Fort Drum.

The majority of breeding songbirds are now present on Fort Drum, although species that typically arrive during the last two weeks of May haven't been found yet. Examples of the latter include Alder and Willow Flycatchers and Mourning Warbler, species that should begin arriving in the next week or so. Aside from Mourning Warbler, the only normally occurring warbler species that has not yet been detected is Cerulean Warbler, but given that this is among the rarest breeding species on Fort Drum, it isn't surprising none have been found yet. One of the best places to see many of the 20 breeding warbler species on Fort Drum is along Figert Road. On 14 May warblers seen in the fields at the intersection of Figert Road and Russell Turnpike included 2 Blue-winged and 2 Golden-winged Warblers working out territory boundaries and the first Prairie Warbler of the season.

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Birds seen on Fort Drum 1 May – 14 May:

Canada Goose	Eastern Phoebe	Magnolia Warbler
Wood Duck	Great Crested Flycatcher	Black-throated Blue Warbler
Mallard	Eastern Kingbird	Yellow-rumped Warbler
American Black Duck	Yellow-throated Vireo	Black-throated Green Warbler
Ruffed Grouse	Blue-headed Vireo	Blackburnian Warbler
Wild Turkey	Warbling Vireo	Pine Warbler
Common Loon	Red-eyed Vireo	Prairie Warbler
Pied-billed Grebe	Blue Jay	Black-and-white Warbler
American Bittern	American Crow	American Redstart
Great Blue Heron	Common Raven	Ovenbird
Turkey Vulture	Horned Lark	Northern Waterthrush
Osprey	Tree Swallow	Canada Warbler
Northern Harrier	Northern Rough-winged Swallow	Eastern Towhee
Broad-winged Hawk	Bank Swallow	Chipping Sparrow
Red-tailed Hawk	Barn Swallow	Clay-colored Sparrow
American Kestrel	Black-capped Chickadee	Field Sparrow
Merlin	Red-breasted Nuthatch	Vesper Sparrow
Common Moorhen	White-breasted Nuthatch	Savannah Sparrow
American Coot	Brown Creeper	Grasshopper Sparrow
Killdeer	Brown Creeper	Henslow's Sparrow
Solitary Sandpiper	House Wren	Fox Sparrow
Upland Sandpiper	Winter Wren	Song Sparrow
Ring-billed Gull	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	Swamp Sparrow
Rock Pigeon	Eastern Bluebird	White-throated Sparrow
Mourning Dove	Veery	White-crowned Sparrow
Black-billed Cuckoo	Hermit Thrush	Dark-eyed Junco
Great Horned Owl	Wood Thrush	Scarlet Tanager
Barred Owl	American Robin	Rose-breasted Grosbeak
Whip-poor-will	Gray Catbird	Indigo Bunting
Chimney Swift	Brown Thrasher	Bobolink
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	European Starling	Red-winged Blackbird
Belted Kingfisher	American Pipit	Eastern Meadowlark
Red-headed Woodpecker	Cedar Waxwing	Rusty Blackbird
Red-bellied Woodpecker	Blue-winged Warbler	Common Grackle
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	Golden-winged Warbler	Brown-headed Cowbird
Downy Woodpecker	"Brewster's" Warbler	Baltimore Oriole
Hairy Woodpecker	Nashville Warbler	Purple Finch
Northern Flicker	Northern Parula	House Finch
Pileated Woodpecker	Yellow Warbler	American Goldfinch
Least Flycatcher	Chestnut-sided Warbler	House Sparrow